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PAY EQUITY COMMISSION

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EFFECTIVE PAY EQUITY COMMITTEES

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One effective tool for achieving pay equity is a pay equity committee. Using a committee in the pay equity process has several advantages:

Improved Identification of Gender Bias:

The essence of pay equity is the identification of unintentional, historic, gender bias. It is likely that a diverse group of people will be able to use their differing perspectives to identify gender bias which may not be immediately evident.

Enhanced Knowledge Base:

The committee members must have knowledge of a wide range of jobs. Any pay equity adjustments resulting from decisions made by a respected group of managers and employees is more likely to be accepted than the decisions made by one staff member such as a human resources or personnel person.

The Committee should mirror the larger organization and be made up of the administration, the employees, and union representatives if any.

Pay Equity Committees are Formed to:

1. develop a strategy or plan, for making the pay equity process work effectively. The goal is to function with a minimum of conflict, stress, or wasteful expense of time and money dealing with later complaints and objections;

2. inform and keep up to date all those people affected by the process, and to seek input from these same people;
3. educate themselves and other key people on exactly what the legislation requires and how to undertake the process;
4. review job information/job descriptions for accuracy, completeness and gender neutrality;
5. select, adapt, or design a gender neutral job comparison system;
6. evaluate jobs;
7. prepare the pay equity plan and oversee the necessary adjustments.

Note: A single committee might take on a number of the above tasks, or subcommittees could take on the tasks and report to the committee.

Membership of the Committee

The composition of any committee is vital to its success. There are two key issues related to committee membership. First, what kind of representation should there be on the committee; and second, which individuals should serve on the committee.

Some of the categories of members include:

Women
Unions
All major occupational groupings (e.g., clerical, unskilled, skilled, technical and professional, managerial, executive).

Women

While there is no reason to believe that women in general are less gender biased than men in general, the following cartoon highlights the lack of credibility if women are not involved in the pay equity process. An equal number of men and women (and of union and management) lends credibility to the committee.

Union

If a committee is used to design or select a job comparison system, there must be representatives from the bargaining agent (as required by the Pay Equity Act). Since the bargaining agent must agree to the results of the job comparison system for a pay equity plan to be developed, it makes good sense to include union members on any committee doing job evaluation.

In addition, the union plays a vital part in the communication process. Because of this it is vital that any communication subcommittee includes union members.

Therefore, there is a joint role for management and union on each of the kinds of committees which could be used to achieve pay equity. Union representatives will likely be stewards, or other people well-informed about the nature of the jobs in the bargaining unit.

All Major Occupation Groupings

As noted, diversity is important in the process of identifying gender bias. Having all occupation groupings represented is a good means of gaining diversity and credibility. In addition, it facilitates committees with broad knowledge about the full range of jobs. Further, it is likely to facilitate acceptance of the results.

Employees will have greater confidence in the fairness of the results, knowing that someone who knows their kind of work is speaking for them on the committee. If it is impossible to have representatives from all occupational groups included, it is most important to ensure that those from women's jobs are adequately represented on all committees.

Those people feeling disaffected will have recourse to the pay equity committee in the form of objections and complaints, which will be time consuming and expensive.

Communication Committee

Once the categories of the membership are determined it is important that those on the committee have the following characteristics:

- knowledgeable about many jobs in the organization
- open-minded especially with respect to issues related to pay equity
- respected by others
- able to make independent judgements
- not overly committed to the current job evaluation system

Possible Means of Selecting Job Evaluation Committee Members

1. ask for volunteers
2. elect members
3. hand-pick the members

Each of these is discussed briefly.

1. Asking for Volunteers

By explaining the committee's purpose, its desired composition and the time commitment required volunteers could be sought. Such volunteers are likely to be interested and committed.

One particularly successful process used involved the following steps:

1. request by the president for volunteers to respond in writing, giving their relevant experience and rationale for wanting to participate.

2. a selection committee representing employees or union and management recommend a slate for the committee membership.

3. The committee was then selected.

4. Those not selected were thanked and asked to be used as a resource.

2. Elect Members

Once the composition categories are identified, the employees to represent each category could be elected. Employees could be self-nominated (volunteers), or be "nominated" by random sample; or be selected by managers, the union, staff association or some other means.

3. Hand-Picked

Traditionally, members on job evaluation committees have been selected by management. This is certainly the least effective means of ensuring perceived independence of the committee from management. And, the successful experience of the Manitoba Government supports the importance of doing pay equity differently than traditional bargaining.

It is possible that once the categories of membership have been identified that each category could select its representatives. This is most feasible with organized groups such as unions and staff associations.

Committee members should consider themselves permanent members. The job evaluation Committee should be seen as long term to the completion of the process. Because group process is the key to success, floating memberships and frequent turnovers are not

advised. The work of all committees (i.e. job evaluation, communication, other) is vital to the organization. It is expected therefore that the work be carried out during regular work time.

Staff should be welcome to attend committee meetings to give input about their jobs, but they should not participate as if they were members. Who is a member and who is not must be made and kept clear.

Roles of Committee Members

An initial task of the committee is to decide on roles for each member and to develop clear expectations of each of these roles. Useful roles are: facilitator/chairperson, recorder, researcher.

However, along with the role definitions, the committee functions best if there is a clear understanding that members may speak on any issue. If possible, have a neutral, non-voting member as the facilitator. This person should be neutral, respected, and knowledgeable about process. The facilitator ensures that both sides get heard and offers an objective third party view.

Size of Committee

The pay equity committee is not only a decision-making committee, it is also an investigative committee. That is, it has the double expectation of being able to come to decisions as well as being in a position to research information.

This two-fold responsibility makes the discussion about size an important one.

As noted earlier, the committee should also represent all groups in the organization so that its opinion will carry with it as great a weight as possible.

The challenge then, is to form a committee which is large enough to gather good information, representative enough to explain the rationale for its decisions to the rest of the organization, and yet small enough to be able to make a decision.

A number of people working on these committees find that, at the beginning, it takes a significant length of time to decide on the evaluation of a single job description. However, as group members develop cohesion, they learn quickly to work cooperatively with one another and develop an efficient process. A committee size of 10 has proven workable.

The next question is usually: how can a chairperson or facilitator expect to control a large, representative committee. Skill and experience are important, and we will touch on several useful techniques later.

Time is clearly an issue here as well. Allow enough time for problems experienced by committee members to be brought out into the open. Take time to allow all ideas, problems, objections, and even irrelevancies to be debated and mutually understood.

A common pitfall for organizations is an underestimation of the amount of time required to do the job, resulting in an under commitment of time and people. We urge you to make this a major commitment.

Committee Process

Recommendations for the efficient and effective functioning of the pay equity committee:

1. Clarify the Terms of Reference of the Committee

Terms of reference are too often passed on verbally, or an assumption is made that because a group is given a title it will know what to do. Plan the work and then develop a time frame to guide you. Set realistic objectives for the committee and don't hesitate to adjust these objectives if you find you have not enough time or people-power to meet them.

2. Clarify the Authority and Power of the Committee

The committee may be granted power of varying degrees. This is also complicated by the fact that union members and bargaining agents are responsible for serving the interest of their members and are not accountable to the organization's administration in the same ways. The union must sign off the final results of the job comparison process, however, and therefore these interests must be kept in mind throughout.

Here are four degrees of authority which a committee may be granted. It would be wise to be clear about your position:

1. **Limited Advisor:** The committee investigates and reports.
   The executive makes the decisions.

2. **Active Advisor:** The committee investigates and suggests action.
   The executive will probably take the committee's suggestions.

3. Limited Agent: The committee takes action with the executive's consent.

4. Active Agent: The committee takes action. The executive can later ratify the action taken.

Not knowing just how far to go with the decision-making on a particular issue is guaranteed to throw the committee into confusion. Clarifying the authority issue also avoids conflict later on with your constituency.

3. Get to Know One Another as Committee Members

Members should consider reporting to one another on their participating; e.g., reasons for wanting to participate; perceived tasks to be done and needs to be met; skills and resources they have which can make a strong and effective contribution to tasks and needs, etc. Continue the process of acknowledging and valuing the effort and contributions of ALL team members.

The process of implementing pay equity can generate conflict at times. The past relationships between the parties, anxiety about doing a good job, pressure of time and other work, lack of experience in this area, all contribute to tension and stress. Keep cool and keep in mind that it gets much easier as you gain practice and an increasingly streamlined process. As Nina Rothschild of Minnesota says: "All you need to make Pay Equity work is a good heart and a clear head."

4. Educate Yourselves as Committee Members

Recognize that you have taken on a complex task, and that many of

you will not share the same kinds of knowledge or skills. Start by learning about what each person can do to educate the group as a whole, then inform yourselves, as a group, about all the benefits and challenges of the pay equity legislation and process.

5. **Develop an Atmosphere of Trust and Openness**

As a colour spectrum is made up of various shades of colour, so an idea is composed of various shades of meaning. Instead of seeing an idea as "good" or "bad", the spectrum approach allows every idea to be seen as having a range of possibilities.

When an idea is heard, three questions are asked:

1. What can be used from the idea?
2. What concerns or reservations are there about the idea?
3. What options are there for turning the concerns into new information?

This third question is important. Without it, blocks are left in the way of possible solutions: with it, the blocks are removed.

7. **Evaluate the Process**

Ongoing evaluation of your committee meetings helps the group improve its procedure.

Here is a questionnaire which can be filled out by Committee members. The chairperson may then summarize the results and lead the group in a discussion of how to improve its own process. (See last two pages of this article).

8. **Integrate New Members**

We have emphasized permanent membership. However, circumstances

may require new members. Make sure that new members can easily learn the committee's functions, its past history and its future plans. See that new members are given support in learning how to work with the group, how to mesh skills, styles, differences, etc. Allow people the opportunity to learn by making mistakes, asking "stupid" questions, etc. Provide the new person with all available resources. Help them feel that they "belong".

Decision-Making Skills in Pay Equity Committees

A key element in the success of the pay equity committee is agreement on the procedure and methods for decision-making prior to deliberation on the issue.

Many committees struggle with the selection of an appropriate decision-making process because no one process is adequate for all situations.

When a decision is absolutely crucial to the success of the committee, it is important to try to reach consensus. (Consensus is reached when all of the committee members at least minimally agree with the decision. They do not have to agree completely). A decision of minor importance (when major commitment from everyone is not necessary) can be reached by majority vote. NOTE: The job evaluation committee in the Manitoba Public Service made hundreds of job evaluation decisions. All were made consenses.

Voting is a speedy method of reaching a decision, but it can work against the cohesiveness of the group. Voting, unless the decision is unanimous, creates a minority. And a minority has three options:

- to support the will of the majority
- to withdraw physically or psychologically from the group
- to work against the majority

Though it takes longer, consensus decision-making results in a higher degree of commitment from all people. And, because it is harder to reach consensus, it forces the group to:

- clarify the issue involved
- gather additional information if necessary
- seek better alternatives

Joel Welty, in his book "Welty's Book of Procedure", has described the process and benefits of consensus decision-making as follows:

"The obvjective .. is to work out some solution that is acceptable to all, NOT to achieve a crushing victory over the bad guys. Therefore, participants bend their efforts toward developing some angle that can make the proposal palatable to those who have objections. This is different from debate where participants work very hard to think of arguments that will stun the opposition, undercut their credibility and prestige, demonstrate their lack of competence or intelligence, split them from their supporters, and reduce them to a state of confused and sullen silence."

"It should surprise no one that the consensus process does, in fact, often produce decisions superior to those produced by traditional parliamentary debate. And it leaves the organization intact and in good repair, not smouldering with resentment and insurrection."

Here are a couple of techniques used successfully by pay equity committees in reaching workable decisions:

1. Analysis of Problem and Solution Proposal

Occassionally a problem or decision is tying up the group because

one person is consistently and firmly opposed to the proposed alternatives.

Postpone the decision for a couple of days while that person works with an "objective" colleague or committee member to explore his or her problems with the group direction.

The person is asked to put these objections in writing. She/he should also be asked to formulate a proposal, also in writing, for resolving this issue which takes the opinions of the others into account. She/he presents this analysis and proposed solution at the next meeting. In this way an individual may find more unity with others on the decision, or is more able to articulate disagreement. The role of the "objective" colleague as consultant is important here in helping the dissenter come up with a unique solution to the group's problem in a less pressured atmosphere.

2. Small group discussion

The key to using small group discussion in the ongoing business of job evaluation is to rotate the composition of the group so that people are constantly learning from one another and developing a cohesive whole, rather than splinters.

Small groups (three to four) people give everyone a chance to clarify their thinking and talk through an issue. There is often no time for this in the large group. People who feel less influential, and people not used to speaking in public, find the small group atmosphere more comfortable when expressing their views.

The advantage of small groups is that they provide a source of new ideas. People can participate more, and small groups also help maintain interest for members of large groups.

Small groups can be used whenever the discussion bogs down, such as when you are looking for a new approach to a problem, or the group is stuck on an issue. Ask people to come back with several possible solutions to present to the large group. When you have a consolidated list of all these ideas, look at the strengths and weaknesses of each idea and attempt to reach consensus on the most promising alternative.

3. Extra-Majority Voting

While consensus building is the best way to decide, we have said that voting on less important issues voting may be appropriate. We usually talk about majority voting to suggest that 51 per cent of the voters in a yes/no vote will be victorious. You may consider setting a higher, say an 85 per cent, rule which will apply when consensus cannot be achieved. In this way you will build in the small group work, and the conscientious searching for a solution agreeable to MOST people. Fifty-one per cent leaves a disgruntled minority of 49 per cent. That percentage represents a great deal of discontent. This amount of disagreement in the group can cost in time and results - just what the work of the committee is trying to avoid.

In all decision-making, try to:

- Encourage quiet or inexperienced people to participate.
- Maintain an interest in the process, not just in your own opinion.
- Focus on what the group needs in order to work toward a good solution. Such needs may include clarification, summarizing of discussion so far, listing on flip chart of possible solutions identified, listing on flip chart of issues in dispute, support for people taking an unpopular position, an exercise break,

mediation between two or more people in serious conflict, more information, etc.

- o Listen. Pay attention to what others have to say. Ask them to expand on their thoughts so that you begin to really understand their experience, assumptions, and beliefs. Lots of conflicts are based on misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

The Key to Success for Job Evaluation Committees

- o flexibility in how information is clarified. Example - one successful job evaluation committee had an employer and a union representative go to the job site to assess the job when there was a dispute - they then reported back to the committee

- o different than normal collective bargaining in that there is a common challenge created by legislation, not by either side.

- o there is a legislated deadline to get the job done - contributes to cooperation

- o meet regularly and intenively: three full days every week or as long as possible at a stretch. Have lunch sent in.

- o normal bargaining process is not as successful

Use negotiation strategies that would not be part of the normal bargaining process such as:

- change the seating arrangements
- have people speak up
- ensure open regular communication both "up" and "down" in the organization
- rate lots of jobs and
- find the middle of the range rather than the average.

- make internal equity adjustments, not just pay equity adjustments.

PERIODIC EVALUATION OF THE COMMITTEE'S PROGRESS: ONE TECHNIQUE

1.	**MEMBERSHIP**							
	The committee has inappropriate membership.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	This committee has the right membership for its task.
2.	**TASK**							
	The task for committee is unclear.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	The task of the committee has been clearly defined.
3.	**CLIMATE**							
	The atmosphere in the committee's meetings obstructs progress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	The committee's meetings have a positive, productive atmosphere.
4.	**OPENNESS**							
	People feel intimidated or guarded.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	People are prepared to speak their minds.
5.	**PROCEDURES**							
	The procedures are often ineffective.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	The procedures are generally effective.
6.	**ENERGY**							
	Those attending fail to invest much energy in the committee's meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Participation is energetic and stimulating.
7.	**OUTSIDE RELATIONSHIPS**							
	The group integrates poorly with other groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	The group has constructive relationships with other groups.

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